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WAR AND HUMAN NATURE

BY HENRY RUTGERS MARSHALL

If courage is required in the warrior, it surely is needed in the advocate of peace.

We all, naturally, tend to resent attempts to inhibit or discredit such of our modes of action as are due to inherited traits; and as men inherit from a long line of ancestry the instinctive tendencies that result in war, it is not at all surprising to find the vigorous among them taking a hostile attitude toward the apostles of peace. Suggestions that are made looking to the abolition of war are thus instantly met by scores of objections based upon their assumed impracticability; and it must be conceded that the pacifists have themselves not infrequently forged weapons to their own discomfiture by their unwillingness to face existing facts.

The courage of the thoughtful among them is sustained, however, when they read the histories of reforms. The idealist has ever found himself handicapped by the well-meant support of a mob of thoughtless enthusiasts. He has always found the practical objections to his propositions presented with exaggerated emphasis; but where his efforts have met with success the world has been surprised to find how suddenly the expected difficulties have dissolved away.

As the life of man is counted, it is but yesterday that war was the fully accredited pastime of men of ability and culture. As Zimmern says in his *Greek Commonwealth*, "it is hard to realize in these days, when fighting taxes the nerves and tires the limbs, but has lost most of its thrills, and all its animal excitement, what a fine sport it was in the days when men regarded it as the great and only game."

Fortunately for us this day is past, we may hope forever. Even those who ask us to relinquish our ideal of enduring peace join with us in agreeing that war is an evil; but they tell us that if we will but face the facts we cannot fail to see that it is a necessary evil. This position I think untenable.

The argument in favor of this view that is most often heard in our day is a biological argument. We are told that man's advance has been gained because he has been a fighting animal; and that having inherited certain instincts which lead to war we cannot look forward to its disappearance.

I have already examined the fallacies involved in this contention in my *War and the Ideal of Peace*, and shall not repeat myself here. There is, however, another argument aiming to show that war is a necessity to the existence of our civilization which is more serious, because it bases its contentions upon the analysis of the moral order. This position we find stated clearly by an influential writer in a late magazine article, as follows:

We live in a continuous state of war. Our civilization cannot be understood save by recognizing that the appeal to force is something quite fundamental to it. . . . Beyond brute force lie, of course, the instruments of moral coercion, public or international opinion, religious influences, and the like. These are superior in moral value, and ultimately are creative and regulative even of the instruments of brute force. But, as I should maintain, they require for their development the favoring environment supplied by a political order that, when challenged, is found to be capable of securing itself by the successful employment of armed force.

The article from which I quote is, in the main, concerned with other contentions to which the criticism to follow is not intended to apply. I use it merely because it is a clear statement of the view I wish to consider, which is seldom put in a form that makes it worthy of analysis and criticism.

It appears to me that we are dealing here with a peculiarly subtle fallacy, which must be considered before we can discuss the argument satisfactorily. The child naturally assumes the existence of a human-like personality in connection with each object that attracts its attention; only by experience does it learn to make the distinction between the animate and inanimate; between the conscious and the so-called unconscious. The early man in like manner not only found difficulty in throwing off his attribution of human traits to objects about him, but habitually assumed the existence of personalities in connection with his objectified conceptions. Thus his tribe or clan came to be looked upon as a pretty definite personality to which he owed allegiance.

Nothing goes farther to show our close relation to this early man than the persistence of this notion of the tribe,

or state, or nation as a personality. It is evident that it is involved with our common conceptions of patriotism, and that it is tacitly assumed in many current discussions of the moral aspects of war. Had not Bismarck assumed the existence of such a national personality he could not have said with full conviction that "the right of the German nation to live and to breathe in unison undivided must not be judged accordingly to the principles of civil law." Did President Runge of Göttingen not make the same assumption he could not tell us that "there is a higher standard of justice for nations than for individuals." In both these cases the state is spoken of as a personality having moral standards of the same general nature as, although more authoritative than, those of individual men.

This notion, frankly accepted, has been developed by a certain group of philosophers, and has led to the Germanic conception of the state as a "superman" of which we hear so much today. This conception has, however, been subjected to such effective destructive criticism that I shall not consider it here. I wish rather to call attention to certain positions which are based upon an unrecognized acceptance of this notion of the personality of the state.

It may be well to note at the start that few, if any, psychologically trained thinkers of importance now-a-days will accept such a notion when it is clearly stated. They see that the existence of a moral consciousness of the form known to man is bound up with a very high grade of organization such as is altogether lacking in the state or nation considered as an organism. In other words, we have come to see that we must look upon states, not as personal existences, but as mere aggregates of individual personalities who have common traits and common aspirations; and among whom "governments" have arisen, and have become persistent, as agencies looking to the realization of these aspirations.

This of course means that what is moral for the individuals composing a state is in a general way moral for these individuals acting collectively; and our great difficulty lies in the fact that we have failed to moralize the collective action of states as we have moralized that of the individuals composing them. We all hold it to be immoral for the individual to encourage suspicion and hate, and covetousness and murder; but the average man does not hold it to be immoral to indulge in nationalized suspicion and hate, in na-

tionalized covetousness which leads to the commercial exploitation of the weaker peoples, in nationalized murder, which is war.

Now in my view this tacit assumption that the state is a personality, rather than a collection of personalities, is involved in the argument here considered. Only by making this assumption can we hold that we must look forward to the continuance of war because moral values "require for their development the favoring environment supplied by a political order that, when challenged, is found to be capable of securing itself by the successful employment of armed force." For this statement implies that, just as the average moral codes of the community must be impressed upon the immoral individual by the force represented in our judicial systems and police control, so the action of immoral personified states can only be controlled by brute force.

It is then noted that the restraint of immoral individual men is effected by national judicial systems which are super-individual, and that until these super-individual judicial systems were established the moral codes of the majority had to be forced upon the minority by brute force. And from this it is argued that as there can never be a *super-national* power capable of exerting control over the immoral personified states, whose ideals differ from those of the majority of states, war must necessarily occur, just as violent coercion of the immoral individual personality would exist today if no super-individual states had come into existence to establish the moral codes of the community.

If we attempt to avoid this unwarranted assumption, and think of the state merely as a collection of individuals having common traits and aspirations, it seems clear that, in general, what an individual may, or may not, do to another individual, a collection of individuals constituting a state may, or may not, do to another collection of individuals constituting another state. Thus it should be our aim to moralize the activities of the State on the same lines on which we have moralized the activities of individuals.

It would then appear that we are without warrant for the assumption that the possibility of war is a necessary factor of man's moral advance; for we may certainly look forward to a time when states will settle their differences without war, just as civilized individuals have learned to settle their differences without recourse to personal violence,—to a time

when a majority of the great Powers will have become what we may call "gentlemanly nations," who will act as individual gentlemen would. Let us see what might be expected to happen in such a case.

If some member of my Club should commit some act which annoyed me I should merely avoid him, unless his act appeared to me to involve a violation of his Club rights. In this case I should tell him so; and if he persisted in his act should refer the matter to the House Committee.

This Committee might decide that I was unwarranted in my complaint, in which case I might be disgruntled, but should again merely avoid meeting the offensive member.

If the Committee decided that my complaint was justified it would so notify the offending member, and in most cases he would at once mend his ways.

But if by chance we had admitted to the Club, in the person of this offending member, a man who was not a gentleman, he might refuse to obey the order of the House Committee, and might continue his offense. What would happen then? It is certain that no one would consider that I, or the Committee, would be warranted in belaboring him, or in putting him forcibly out of the Club. He would merely be *ostracised*; and this so completely that he would either mend his ways, or would leave the Club.

Now let us assume that a large proportion of the "great Powers" had become gentlemanly nations, and had formed an international organization for their mutual benefit which we may call the National Club. Suppose then that some one of its members—we may without offense take it to be Germany—decided that it was to its advantage to establish a colony in South America.

The United States would at once call Germany's attention to the fact, formulated in the Munroe Doctrine, that such a project was distasteful to it.

If Germany were a thoroughly gentlemanly nation he would at once abandon his project; unless he came to the conclusion that Uncle Sam was a fussy old gentleman who was unreasonable in his request; and he might say that, as he had never thought Uncle Sam justified in the maintenance of this Monroe Doctrine, he proposed to continue the development of his colony. Under these conditions Uncle Sam would at once refer the matter of dispute to the National Club's House Committee;—the National Council.

That Council might decide that Uncle Sam was unreasonable, and might uphold Germany's contention. In that case Uncle Sam might take great umbrage; but he would not take steps to obstruct Germany in her scheme of colonization, for if he did so all the nations composing the National Club would ostracise him absolutely, politically and economically. He certainly would not attempt to fight the whole National Club as a body, nor Germany, who would be supported by the whole Club. He might resign from the National Club; but he would soon find such action to have been a mistake, and would speedily sue for re-election.

But on the other hand suppose that the National Council decided that Uncle Sam was justified in his contentions, and that Germany must give up his colonization scheme. What would happen? If Germany had become a completely gentlemanly nation he would acquiesce in the decision of the Council, doubtless with grumbling, and perhaps with more or less change of commercial attitude toward Uncle Sam, and possibly toward other members of the National Club. He certainly would not fight to maintain his position. He might resign from the National Club; but when the generation that had dictated such action had been replaced by a new one, he would soon find it desirable to apply for re-admission.

But suppose that the National Club, having made a false judgment as to the character of Germany, had admitted him as a member, he—*quod avertat Deus*—turning out to be not a gentlemanly nation. And, as such, let us suppose that Germany decided that he would proceed with his colonization scheme, notwithstanding the action of the National Council. Would it even then be necessary for Uncle Sam, or for the National Club, to fight Germany? Not at all. The nations forming the Club would one and all merely ostracise him utterly and completely, politically, economically and in every other way; and that would surely speedily bring him to terms without any resort to armed conflict. He would grumble mightily; he might even resign from the National Club, and proceed with his colonization scheme; and to this neither the Club nor Uncle Sam would raise warlike opposition. For his colony would surely be a failure if it were internationally ostracised; and when a new generation appeared upon the scene he would certainly abandon his colony and apply for re-admission to the National Club, a chastened but a better member.

It is easy to exaggerate the difficulties of instituting this international ostracism, but I believe (*pace* President Lowell) that they would all disappear in practice.

It may appear, at first sight, that I am here making use of a highly strained analogy. A gentlemen's club, it may be said, is necessarily constituted of specially selected individuals, and governed by the recognized and established rules of current social gentlemanly behavior; thus its problems are simplified to the greatest possible extent; while the problems raised by international relations are inextricably complex.

In answer to this it may be said, in the first place, that the National Club would itself be constituted by the voluntary association of the great Powers which had recognized their community of interest, and would thus constitute a specially selected group of individual nations. And the agreement to form such an association would of course imply that the peoples who allow their Governments to enter such a National Club had come to the recognition, on broad lines, of established principles of gentlemanly behavior, and had attained an appreciation of the fact that they must demand of their governmental agents international action in accord with these principles. Under such conditions the matters with which the governing body of the National Club would have to deal would without question gain greatly in simplicity; for they would be concerned only with problems raised by the action of national members, and not at all with the intricate questions of party politics within these nations which may have led to any nation's special act.

Again it may be held that in employing this analogy the assumption is made that there would always be a practically unanimous verdict by all but one of the national members against this one; and that such a situation would seldom occur; that on the contrary international party groups would more probably be formed within the National Club which would speedily lead to its disruption. The possibility of such a contingency must of course be granted. Similar situations have arisen in social clubs of gentlemen, and have resulted in their dissolution: but on the whole they have been so rare that no groups of men are led to hold that the formation of a club is absurd because in the nature of the case it would be short lived, and its activities without significance.

I do not wish for a moment to minimize in any way the

difficulties necessarily connected with the formation of such a National Club; nor to assume that no new and unforeseen difficulties would arise if once it were formed. But, on the other hand, I protest against the pessimism of those who magnify these difficulties so far as to reject altogether the suggestion that it is worth while to make the attempt to form such an international organization with the hope that it may reduce the chances of war.

It is the trend of such arguments to which I object; the belief they foster that if we consider the nature of man as he exists we are bound to join with those who hold that war is necessary to human advance, and therefore that we must look forward to the recurrence of wars in the future as they have recurred in the past. I see no reason to abandon the hope that the collective will of the people making up the great Powers may become a gentlemanly will; the hope that the great nations may become gentlemanly nations; and this perhaps at no very distant era as the life of the human race is counted. And I see no reason why then the great nations should not join together to form an international organization that would deal with national concerns in much the same manner that individual gentlemen in organizations of narrower scope deal with individual interests.

There would still exist lesser Powers that had not yet become gentlemanly nations, and these might need to be coerced from time to time to keep them from disturbing the peaceful progress of the people composing one or another of these gentlemanly nations; and to this end it might be necessary to maintain some relatively small military and naval organization. But as the orderly people of our great cities maintain a police force to restrain the disorderly, but do not commonly use it to adjudicate differences between individuals of the orderly class, so it appears to me not too much to hope that eventually the great nations bound together in a National League may find means to establish an international police which would be maintained to keep the disorderly nations from doing injury; and that without danger that this police will be employed to induce a conflict between members of the National League themselves.

The difficulty found in avoiding this assumption of the personal nature of the state is seen in another form of argument which aims to give a *quasi* moral status to war; claiming that valuable changes which have followed special wars

have been due to the wars themselves; and tacitly assuming, with no warrant whatsoever, that these results could not have been gained by any other instrumentality than war. Thus, we read in a late review in the *New York Nation*:

It is unfortunate that praiseworthy desire for peace should be so blended in the minds of certain emotional advocates with hatred of abstract war, that they fail to admit that any desirable results may be attainable by force. Filled with zeal, itself a form of contention, they seem blind and deaf to example and argument. Nevertheless, our own country owes its independent existence, and its unimpaired unity, to two *righteous* wars.

We have here the assumption that we are justified in welcoming the coming into existence of an independent state as in itself an unquestionable advantage; much as we might rejoice in the birth of an individual man-child. The advantage connected with this independence would thus seem to lie in the fact that the new born state is a *quasi* personal state.

But if we look at the state merely as a collection of individuals the matter appears in a quite different light. I imagine all will agree that independence is an advantage to groups of individuals whose aspirations and aims are not represented in the existing state in which they are incorporated. But we surely may question whether independence in itself is an aim that can be urged on moral grounds.

Furthermore the instance of the United States, here given as an indisputable proof of the position maintained, is not altogether a happy one. For although we, who glory in the heroism of the founders of our republic, may be distressed in making the acknowledgment, nevertheless, as philosophically minded men, we certainly must find it difficult to maintain that the collection of individuals making up the state of Canada is less advantageously placed today than that collection of individuals which threw off the "yoke of England" and thus, gaining its independence, constituted the Federal Union of which I am a citizen.

So again, in the statement above quoted, we have the assumption that the unimpaired unity of a state—its mere size and strength—is in itself an unquestionable advantage; much as we might rejoice in the growth of an individual youth in stature and muscular vigor. It would thus seem to be held that the value of this unimpaired unity of the United States, which was gained at the awful price of the bloodshed of the great Civil War of 1861 to 1865, lay in the fact that the

quasi personal state gained unquestionable advantage by maintaining its bigness and power.

But if we think of the state merely as a collection of individuals having common aims and aspirations; and agree, as we have above, that national independence is properly desired by groups of individuals whose aspirations are not represented in the state in which they find themselves born; then it seems difficult to defend the use made of the strength of the North to compel the weaker South to remain part of a state which did not express the ideals of its people.

That the inestimable boon of the abolition of slavery was one result of this war is to be conceded. But it seems highly probable that, if the right of secession had been granted, the abolition of slavery would not have long been delayed; for the new Southern Confederacy would have been subjected to the same moral and economic pressure that has led to the abandonment of slavery by all civilized races.

I realize that I am here making statements that must be unpalatable to many readers. The defenders of war are constantly asking us who are pacifists to face the facts; and this I am here attempting to do, and asking them to do.

And finally let me say that, as a pacifist, I do not find that this facing of the facts leads me to abandon hope of the eventual advent of an era of enduring world peace.

The dawn of this era may not be as near as one might wish; but I protest against any view suggesting that the nature of man precludes the hope that such an enduring peace can ever be attained; or that places its consummation in a distant future, when man shall have been so thoroughly changed in his physical and moral nature as to have lost the characteristics we now hold to be noble and ennobling.

It disturbs me greatly to read from the pens of influential men such words as "no sensible man expects to abolish wars altogether," which we find in the otherwise thoroughly admirable article by President Lowell of Harvard in the *Atlantic* for September, 1915. I do not feel that it is just to say that I am not a sensible man, yet I fully believe that we may expect the eventual utter abolition of war; and that, if we adopt certain modes of international action, among them the course of procedure which President Lowell himself so forcibly defends, the ideal of enduring peace may perhaps be realized sooner than now appears probable.

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